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**Survey Shows Drop In Harmful Youth Behavior**

**BISMARCK, N.D., Nov. 2, 2015** – School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said Monday that a newly published survey of North Dakota high school students showed a substantial drop in tobacco use, as well as less binge drinking and prescription drug abuse.

The students surveyed said they were more apt to wear seat belts, and less likely to drink and drive; ride with a driver who had been drinking; or talk on a cell phone or send text messages while driving.

The findings are part of the newest Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which was begun in 1990 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor potential causes of health and social problems. The survey is voluntarily taken in the spring of odd-numbered years by students in grades seven through 12. The students' answers are anonymous and cannot be traced back to them.

In North Dakota the survey is administered by the state Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health. North Dakota has taken part in the YRBS since 1995.

The new survey data shows tobacco use is becoming even rarer among high school students. Eighty percent of the students responding to the survey said they did not use cigarettes, cigars or smokeless tobacco, an increase from 74 percent two years ago.

The percentage of high school students who said they had smoked a cigarette at least once in the month before the survey dropped from 19 percent to 12 percent. The percentage of high schoolers who said they had ever tried to smoke a cigarette was 35 percent, down from 41 percent in 2013.

Smokeless tobacco use also declined. This year, 11 percent of the students surveyed said they had used smokeless tobacco at least once in the previous month. Two years ago, 14 percent said they had.

Jeanne Prom, director of the North Dakota Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, said the results were "great news, and shows that our hard work in every county is paying off."

"But we have more work to do to make sure all kids in North Dakota are protected from the dangers of tobacco use, including e-cigarettes," Prom said.

For the first time this year, the survey asked students if they had used e-cigarettes, which are devices that convert a nicotine-infused liquid into a mist that is inhaled. Twenty-two percent of the high school students who participated in the survey said they had used a "vaping" product at least once in the month before the survey.

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Prom said the devices were potentially harmful to young people. “Nicotine exposure at a young age may cause lasting harm to brain development, promote addiction, and lead to sustained tobacco use,” she said.

The survey said 27 percent of the North Dakota high school students who took part in the survey reported feeling “sad or hopeless” almost every day for two or more weeks in the past year.

Fourteen percent said they had planned a suicide attempt in the past year, and 9 percent said they had attempted to kill themselves at least once in the last year.

Baesler has taken steps to combat these trends. She is preparing training for educators to help them identify troubled students. This year, the Legislature approved requiring annual training for high school and middle school administrators, teachers and other instructional staff in how to spot suicide risks.

Baesler also supported a separate law, approved by the Legislature, to require public school teachers to be trained to detect possible student mental health problems before they may qualify for a teaching license.

Listed below are highlights of the survey’s findings for high school students (grades 9 through 12). They are expressed as a percentage of the students surveyed. Results are listed for 2015 and 2013, and for 2005 when data for that year are available.

### **TOBACCO/ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES**

Did not use cigarettes, cigars or smokeless tobacco in the past month:

2015: 80 percent

2013: 74 percent

2005: 72 percent

Attempted to smoke a cigarette at any time in their lives:

2015: 35 percent

2013: 41 percent

2005: 56 percent

Smoked a cigarette for the first time before age 13:

2015: 7 percent

2013: 8 percent

2005: 17 percent

Smoked a cigarette at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 12 percent

2013: 19 percent

2005: 22 percent

Smoked a cigarette on 20 or more days in the month before the survey:

2015: 4 percent

2013: 7 percent

2005: 12 percent

Smoked cigarettes daily:

2015: 3 percent

2013: 4 percent

2005: 8 percent

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Used smokeless tobacco at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 11 percent

2013: 14 percent

2005: 11 percent

Tried an e-cigarette at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 22 percent

## **ALCOHOL**

Tried alcohol at least once:

2015: 62 percent

2013: 66 percent

Tried alcohol before age 13:

2015: 12 percent

2013: 15 percent

2005: 20 percent

Drank at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 31 percent

2013: 35 percent

2005: 49 percent

Had at least five drinks in one sitting at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 18 percent

2013: 22 percent

2005: 34 percent

## **DRUGS**

Tried marijuana before age 13:

2015: 5 percent

2013: 6 percent

2005: 7 percent

Used marijuana at least once in the month before the survey:

2015: 15 percent

2013: 16 percent

2005: 16 percent

Took a prescription drug without a prescription:

2015: 15 percent

2013: 18 percent

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## **DRIVING**

Drove when drinking within the previous 30 days:

2015: 8 percent

2013: 11 percent

Talked on a cell phone while driving within the previous 30 days:

2015: 61 percent

2013: 68 percent

Texted or emailed while driving within the previous 30 days:

2015: 58 percent

2013: 59 percent

Never wore a seat belt while driving:

2015: 10 percent

2013: 12 percent

Rarely or never wore a seat belt in a car driven by someone else:

2015: 9 percent

2013: 12 percent

2005: 17 percent

## **DIET**

Did not eat vegetables in the week before the survey:

2015: 5 percent

2013: 6 percent

2005: 4 percent

Ate vegetables at least once in the past week:

2015: 59 percent

2013: 63 percent

2005: 65 percent

Students who ate breakfast daily in the seven days before the survey:

2015: 38 percent

2013: 38 percent

Drank a sugar-containing beverage daily during the seven days before the survey:

2015: 28 percent

2013: 34 percent

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## **EXERCISE**

Physically active for five of the seven days before the survey, for at least one hour daily:

2015: 51 percent

2013: 51 percent

Avoided more than an hour's physical activity daily in the seven days before the survey:

2015: 12 percent

2013: 11 percent

Played video or computer games or used a computer for non-school tasks for at least three hours daily:

2015: 39 percent

2013: 34 percent

Watched television for at least three hours daily:

2015: 19 percent

2013: 21 percent

2005: 24 percent

Got 8 or more hours of sleep a night:

2015: 30 percent

2013: 30 percent

## **EMOTION, VIOLENCE AND SUICIDE**

Bullied on school property in the past year:

2015: 24 percent

2013: 25 percent

Bullied electronically in the past year:

2015: 16 percent

2013: 17 percent

Assaulted while on a date in the last year:

2015: 8 percent

2013: 10 percent

Felt sad or hopeless almost daily for two or more weeks in the past year:

2015: 27 percent

2013: 25 percent

2005: 20 percent

Attempted suicide one or more times in the past year:

2015: 9 percent

2013: 12 percent

2005: 6 percent

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Planned a suicide attempt in the past year:

2015: 14 percent

2013: 14 percent

2005: 12 percent

Seriously considered a suicide attempt:

2015: 16 percent

2013: 16 percent

2005: 15 percent

Additional information:

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Youth Risk Behavior Survey website:

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/Administrators/SafeHealthy/YRBS/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention YRBS website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>

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